

THE FIRST FLOWERING OF WELWITSCHIA MIRABILIS HOOK F. RAISED FROM SEEDS.

(With Plate XII.)

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As early as in 1927 the Botanic Garden of the University of Stellenbosch received some seeds of the *Welwitschia mirabilis* by the courtesy of the late Prof. R. Marloth, from Cape Town. They were so many, that the old professor told me, that we will now be able to plant an avenue of it from the Stellenbosch railway station right up to the botanic garden. But *hélas*, not all he gave me germinated. They were sown on December 24th, 1927. I raised them in our ordinary leaf-mould soil mixed with concrete sand. Quite a lot of them went on nicely and now the question arose how to treat them further. Happily we could buy at that time some drainage pipes and cemented them on one side. As the plants strongly dislike any mica in the soil, but otherwise like to grow in decomposed granite, I tried to get it here. It was not so easy, but at least I got some. I mixed it up with some leaf-mould, filled the drain-pipes with it and planted the young *Welwitschias* in it. During the first year and also some years afterwards we kept the plants outside during summer, but as we lost some of them owing to unexpected rains, we now also during summer grow them in one of our succulent conservatories. As they are difficult to handle, all our eight plants stand on their present places already for some years. During last year we noticed, that one of them made some excrescence and during this year it grew further and developed into two small cones, which will probably grow further and may be female ones, at least we hope so. Some pictures of the plant and the cones will show things more clearly than long explanations will do. As it is not as hot here as in their home, they will probably grow much longer till they are fully developed and we hope the best for them. It would be a pity, if they would not develop further, but fall off.

The plants needed about 20 years time till the first one starts flowering, while all the others give no sign of it at all. At least one knows now besides the necessary age for forming a cone, a bit more about the age of older plants, if comparing the width of the leaves with those of our plants which are now 7—10 cm. broad. According to that, these plants much reach hundreds of years of age.

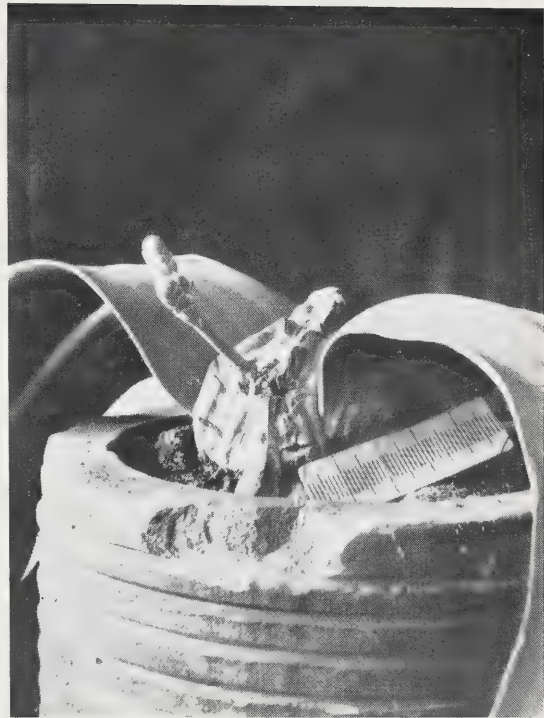


PLATE XII.

Welwitschia mirabilis. Seedling, sown December, 1927, flowering for the first time
December, 1947, in Stellenbosch University Botanic Garden.